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THE FUNCTION OF RELIGION

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Philosophy is not religion and certainly religion is not philosophy, yet the two have always advanced or retreated side by side. It is indeed difficult for any man to be religious without some philosophical presupposition. The importance of this fact justifies us in the printing of several articles in the field. One of them by PROFESSOR J. H. TUFTS of the University of Chicago appeared in the July number of the BIBLICAL WORLD. It will be interesting to compare the views of these two independent and philosophical thinkers, each of whom is deeply concerned with practical as well as theoretical aspects of religion.

Religion furnishes the eternal poetry of life. When the human mind awoke on this little planet and began to become conscious of its bent, it discovered a strange disharmony between its inner demands and the environment in which it found itself. And so it set about recreating the world to make it a fit abode for the spirit of man. It created a new heaven and a new earth in keeping with its dimly conscious ideals. And this creative function is ever a vital need of the mind of man. From our ideals and striving it builds out the harmonious completion, defying the gravitation of the world of appearances which would keep us earth-bound. It surrounds this prosy work-a-day life with the sunset halo of infinity. In the bleak and inhospitable world of matter it creates a climate in which the spirit can breathe and create. It bids us look beyond the mountains which hem in this little narrow gorge of circumstance and discloses to it, through the rifts of our cloudy ignorance, the vast stretches of the open plains of opportunity. It enhances the prospect by

the blue haze of what we can become and thus gives meaning to a life which otherwise would be poor, sordid, and mean. It holds out the apples of the tree of knowledge for those who have the self-control and venturesomeness to seek the truth. It transforms the thorns and thistles of our troubles, through industry and hope, into a garden of human achievement. It makes happiness and content blossom as the rose in what would otherwise be a joyless desert.

Religion and the Building out of Values

Religion thus strives to compensate by its ideal supplementation for the lack which we feel in the world as it is. The world of the senses is a chaotic world of things piled on things. It is a confused mixture of rain and sunshine. Day follows night; and by dear-bought experience we learn that some things are good for us and some are bad. But the human mind insists that somehow this little life of ours and the world of which we are a part must have meaning. It

seeks for unity within this dance of circumstance. Its efforts have been crude enough. It takes a long time to sort and organize such a motley world of detail. But the instinctive feeling of the human mind has ever been that the world without can be no less reasonable than the world within; that intelligence and purpose are somehow to be found within the riddle of things if we can just penetrate beneath appearances and discover the essential. The world beyond us must somehow be congenial to this fragment of it which strives to understand it.

Out of this religious conviction science grows, for science is first concealed within the bosom of religion. It is the offspring of the religious instinct to seek for meaning in the world. It is true that science works with severer methods and superior tools than those of primitive religion. It constructs balances and microscopes and telescopes. It invents a technique of patient research. It enlarges for us the realm of nature's routine. It increases our powers of control. For the fairies and nature sprites of primitive faith it substitutes the mechanical conceptions of causality. It submits the imagination to a stern discipline. It would fain banish poetry from the world. But it ill becomes it to be disloyal to its mother. And the human mind still raises its protest that the world is more than mechanism, more than chance *ensembles* of things. It insists on its faith, though more chastely expressed than that of primitive man, that the laws of mind are somehow the laws of things, and that a superior reason somehow reveals itself in the working of the whole. Thus religion

ekes out the circumscribed world of science and furnishes the inspiration that science itself lives by. For science, though sometimes unwittingly, is still nursed by the life-blood of its mother. The sincere and loyal devotion to truth is a religious devotion and must ever press on to the meaning of the wholeness of things.

It is not enough that we discover unity and meaning in our world, but we demand eternal objects of loyalty. This is a world of change. Earth's glories pass away. Love grows cold. The friends we have trusted may fail us in the hour of need. They change or we change, and the harmony fails like "sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh." The choicest human relations are at best unstable on this transitory stage, where we meet and part as ships that pass in the night. Institutions get outworn and fail to fit our needs. Civilizations are turned to ashes in the senseless conflicts of men. The objects of our earthly hopes and aspirations are made of fragile stuff. In the midst of the changes and chances of this mortal life we long for a stable object of loyalty. When our faith meets with shipwreck in our human temporal world, we pray in our distress, "O Thou who changest not, abide with me." We seek for one who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, with whom is neither variableness nor shadow of turning. Again we supplement the fickle weather of an actual world with an ideal world of values. And if we find ourselves mistaken about eternal truths and if sacred time-honored institutions prove to be old bottles which cannot hold the new wine of progress, we attach our faith amid the wreckage of time to

the spirit of truth which abides, to a kingdom not of this world. But we feel that in some way there must be an eternal and intrinsic world of values which can give significance and worth to the fleeting values of our passing lives—an eternal ideal of good for which we can strive and in which we can put our trust though all else crumbles.

In the world in which the soul finds itself there seems to be a constant disharmony between what we feel ought to be, the soul's dream of right and beauty, and the world as it actually is. There is much ugliness, much that is wrong within and without. The evil forces often seem to triumph. "The wicked flourish like a green bay tree." Lying and deceit seem for the time being more successful than right-doing. The forces of this world mock us and say: "Where is now thy God?" Life, from the narrow perspective that we see, spells failure at best. It has been said that every animal life is a tragedy. How much truer that is of human life. Our best purposes are frustrated. How insignificant the accomplishment of the greatest life compared with the task that it has set itself. It is the labor of Sisyphus rolling a stone that ever rolls back, the vain longing of Tantalus for the water that ever recedes. "Vanity of vanities" is written over the whole of man's futile efforts. And the most tragic failure of all is not to realize the failure, but to live in illusory content.

In this world of maladjustment and evil the soul raises its protest. The world cannot be so blind, so disregardful of our ideals, as it seems. At least we may retain faith in our own dignity and may grit our teeth and redouble

our efforts at the oar, with a dumb willingness to risk and with the venturesomeness of Tennyson's Ulysses:

. . . . Strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.
. . . . For my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset and the paths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles.
. . . . But something ere the end,
Some work of noble note may yet be done.

Is there in this human world no spring of budding hope, no summer of fruition to follow "the winter of our discontent"? Shall we drink the cup of bitterness alone? Shall we bear the whole burden of life? Shall there be child labor, white slavery, and war, and God not be responsible? Is not this feeling of disharmony begotten of the universe that brought us forth? And shall it be indifferent to our protest and efforts? The understanding of life's problem in the large is beyond us. With Job we are forced to hold our peace in view of our overwhelming ignorance. But faith springs up afresh in the human heart that somehow

God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world

could we but grasp the larger purposes of God. There is a force, we believe, greater than ourselves that works for righteousness and that shapes our human destiny, long though the task may be. Though there is much that is bad in us, the good shall somehow triumph. A remnant shall survive. The loyal Servant of Jehovah shall not labor and suffer in vain. Perhaps in the very struggle, born of the faith in the right,

lies the victory. At least we are not utterly forsaken in our endeavors. Though the journey be hard, the goal is worth struggling for.

I go to prove my soul!
I see my way, as birds their trackless way.
I shall arrive! What time, what circuit
first,
I ask not: but unless God send his hail
Or blinding fire balls, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time, His good time, I shall arrive:
He guides me and the bird. In His good
time.

In some vision of beauty the ugliness shall disappear. In some symphony of life the discord shall be unified. If we do not grow weary of well-doing the right shall finally triumph. Thus the soul builds out an ideal world of right and beauty to compensate for this marred and inharmonious world of ours.

But what about the individual soul and its destiny? Is the promise only to the race in its endless striving, or perhaps to the endless aeons of the cosmic universe? Shall we fall by the way that others may rise on our dead selves to a nobler destiny? Is our little troubled consciousness to be extinguished like a candle in the night? How much there is within us which fails of expression in this little life! How much that is suppressed or dormant because a disordered environment fails to call it forth from its living tomb! How many a life is blasted in the midst of its promise, "as oft a rough wind sheds the unripe promise of a field flower." Is this life of ours, so pregnant with unfulfilled hopes and yearnings, to be utterly barren of fulfilment? Is love's dream to prove a hollow mockery, all because of blind chance?

Again the human heart raises its protest:

God! Thou art mind. Unto the master mind

Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone.

Yet God is good.

And though death seems to triumph and the dear lips are still and the hand is cold, though earth closes over the fair form and the green grass heals the scar of its resting-place, love will not have it that it is the end; but like a sweet angel proclaims over the grave: "He is not here, but is risen." What moulders here "is but his shadow. His substance is not here." The universe will not permit that which has significance and worth to perish.

There is an instinct within us which insists that this life is but a moment, a fragment, of an unseen larger life in which it has its true setting.

Not in entire forgetfulness
And not in utter nakedness
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home.

Much there is, no doubt, that is of earth, earthy in what this instinct craves, many vain hopes and desires which echo the carnal disappointments of this world. Our insight is frail at best, and our love does not always understand itself. But the human mind insists that somehow the world of death shall be supplemented by a world of immortality, that what an eternal love finds unique and valuable shall not perish from the earth.

Religion and the Proportion of Values

Another function of religion is to give us the right perspective of life, to

establish the proper proportion of values. The instincts that grovel at the bottom of our nature are getting far more than their share of our interest. We are thinking far too much of our eating and drinking, of our sense gratifications. For these we are altogether too ready to barter away our spiritual heritage. We think far too little of our common good and too much of our individual comfort.

The world is too much with us. Late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:

Little we see in nature that is ours:
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

This sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are upgathered now like sleeping flowers:

For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not—Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

It is the function of religion to teach us to set first things first. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." In order to correct our distorted perspective of values it may indeed be necessary to over-emphasize, to over-correct. Were there danger of overemphasizing the spiritual, we might have to exhort with Browning:

Let us not always say,
"Spite of this flesh today
I strove, made head, gained ground
upon the whole!"

As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh
More now, than flesh helps soul!"

Flesh does have its rightful claims. We cannot ignore the primitive instincts without committing suicide. But in most of us flesh is too strongly fortified to need further defense. We must ceaselessly batter down its self-contented immurement by preaching the kingdom not of this world, the kingdom of the good of the whole, of the future generations as well as the present. We must relearn again and again the lesson of renunciation, "lest we forget, lest we forget." Perhaps in this way the pendulum of life may swing nearer to the golden mean. We may be sure that, if we once learn to put first things first, other things will fall into their proper order. To build our civilization on material efficiency alone and neglect the poetry, the farther ideal reaches of life, is to brutalize man, is to lose the proper control of the primitive within us and to invite just such a catastrophe as that which is visiting Europe today, where material and spiritual values are alike buried in the general chaos. We must learn sanity of perspective. And that we can only do by seeing things, as Spinoza would say, *sub specie aeternitatis*, by learning to think in terms of the whole of life. Only the religious devotion to a common ideal can enforce this lesson upon a short-sighted, self-seeking race, be its blindness individual or national. Of the two, national selfishness has shown itself to be the more dangerous.

It is true conventional religion has often joined in conspiracy with men's

passions, reinforcing their blindness by somnolent acquiescence or misdirected devotion, following the flag of man's selfish lust for power. But for true religion no ideal short of humanity can suffice. Its cause must be the common good of man. Its loyalty is limited by no national or race boundaries. For there can be no true loyalty to a nation which is not at the same time loyalty to humanity. We can worship no national god. Spiritually and materially our destiny is interlinked. And sectional hate and strife must prove suicidal to true human realization. We must learn to think in terms of the whole. Our rivalry must be to realize the best. Our conquest must be by superior and more beneficent ideals. There is beauty, it is true, in the devoted loyalty of the youth of many lands in this terrible tragedy. The pity is that "someone has blundered," that the cause is not worthy of the sacrifice. And no cause can be worthy except the melioration of our human lot, the improvement and happiness of humanity.

This loyalty to a human cause must mean devotion to the future race as well as to the present. What about man a million years from now? In looking backward we can see that the faltering steps and sacrifice of man's upward march are more significant for us than they could have been for man then and there. It is by his struggles and failures that our achievements have been made possible. We are part of a great march of life. Our efforts, too, are steps in the upward climb of man. Shall we be unmindful of the promise of the race? Shall we by our selfishness cut short the journey to the higher goal? Shall

humanity fail in its destiny because of our lack of faith? We must build, even as the bee builds, for generations which we cannot see, guided by an instinctive faith which, wiser than it knows, constructs the destiny of a nobler future—a faith in the promise of a redeemed and happy humanity. Thus religion furnishes us a new center of insight and energy which gives us both a true perspective of values and fresh inspiration for its realization. We shall hate, not each other, but whatever degrades and debases us. We shall love and cherish whatever is eternally human.

Religion and the Initiation into Social Values

Religion from time immemorial has had for its function to initiate the individual into the solemn obligations of our social life. It has made the vital bonds of our common life sacred and impressive, and by this primary impression, and the faith back of it, has tended to make them stable. It has made every important human bond a bond with the divine as well. It lies about us like heaven in our infancy, and by its constructive faith makes us members of the spiritual community. With solemn vows it initiates us into the new consciousness of youth and idealizes its pressing instincts into activities for beauty, right, and truth. It hallows love's dream and makes it a marriage of true souls. When we stumble and fall under the burden of the day it takes us by the hand and reinstates us again into the kingdom of usefulness and love. At the portal of every great opportunity it sanctifies the task and gives us renewed courage. It conse-

brates our earthly bonds of friendship and calls us to friendship with God. It stays with us through the livelong day and widens our sympathies for a larger life with men. It blesses our gray hours and transforms the lines of age into the expressions of a benevolent soul. When the shadows lengthen and eventide comes it prepares us for the final mysteries and gives His beloved sleep and when life's fitful fever is over it proclaims over our ashes the gospel of eternal hope.

Religion thus makes sacramental and sacred our vital human bonds. Can human institutions stand without it? Without its halo of divinity will human obligations prove inviting and enduring? Will the family and other institutions crumble under the weight of human selfishness? In the new stresses and strains of life we need more than ever the solemn consecration of the religious consciousness—its emphasis that true human obligations are also divine obligations; that initiation into human life at every step must also, in order to insure real success and happiness, be an initiation into the Kingdom of heaven; that God calls us to devotion to the great common tasks of life.

Religion and the Conservation of Values

Religion emphasizes loyalty to the spiritual heritage of the past. It is the great conservative agency, the balance-wheel of society. It insists upon the importance of holding fast to that which we have attained. Civilization is but of yesterday. There is the constant danger of sliding back to the level of the savage and the brute. Witness today

the spectacle of some of the most cultured nations disregarding the restraints of civilization and demolishing in the blindness of hate, not only all the material monuments of civilization, but all those human bonds which we have regarded as sacred. What shall it profit us that by means of science we have, as never before, become masters of nature's forces on land, in the air, and under the sea, if we in our blindness use these forces to blow each other out of existence? Of what avail is it that we create beautiful cathedrals and masterful art if in our animal fury we reduce the work of centuries to ashes? Why build institutions of learning and bring out splendid youth if we are going to use them as "cannon fodder"? Of what avail is our great industry, with its magnificent machinery, if we become slaves of our own tools and reduce human beings to a sordid and unhappy existence? Of what use are all our culture and wealth if we are going to be the prey of our primitive and selfish impulses? Of what use is thought itself, the noblest of human endowments, if it loses its fundamental motive for constructiveness, turns upon itself, and eats out its own heart? Is this great civilization, which it has taken a million years to launch, to founder on the rocks of our selfish blindness? We need a wholesome reverence for what the race has established in the way of principles of right if civilization is not going to suffer shipwreck. Nothing but a profound religious sense of the sacredness of the obligations of man to man can hope to hold against the fierce instincts of envy and hate in our primitive nature. It still holds true as of old: "Except the

Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." Religion, with its consciousness of the guardianship of God over what the race has so dearly won, is the essential cement in holding our social structure together.

Today more than ever we need restraint and thoughtfulness in the complex social readjustments of which we are a part. New social forces have been liberated. New problems must be met. In the clashing of the interests of individuals, classes, and nations how shall we maintain our poise until new solutions have been arrived at? In our restless desire for change we must not forget the lessons of human experience. Mere uncontrolled change is anarchy, a ship without ballast, an engine without brakes running down hill toward a bridgeless chasm. We cannot afford to throw away the controls of the past in steering toward the new dangers of the future. It is true that religion has too often been interpreted as the maintenance of vested privilege, as the bulwark of the inequalities of man, as the sanction for things as they are as against the forward-looking instinct of justice. But true religious loyalty is not slavery to the past. It is the due regard for human claims. It is the maintenance of peace and order, of mutual regard and forbearance, while our conflicting interests are being adjusted into a common life. Religion must be, above all, loyalty to an ideal social order. But this can only be realized as a fulfilment of the past, not in breaking away from the past.

The meaning of the religious sanctions must indeed vary with man's social development. Our old ideas of heaven and hell were taken over from a savage

imagination and are no longer real to us. Our old idea of God was reminiscent of an antiquated social order. But some faith there must be in an inexorable justice working through the laws of the universe. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." As of old, so always, God is the guardian of our common life. The bond that binds us together is not a mere concern of man, but a sacramental bond, a partnership with God. In the absence of such a supernatural sanction, bridling man's individual and collective selfishness, it is hard to see how human institutions can hold together. Religion takes its stand for the momentous values of society. It restrains our impatience, our fickle, momentary impulses, in order that our common life may prosper. True, it has often been confused in its insight. It has sometimes emphasized form rather than substance, etiquette rather than morality. It has often in its institutional capacity been blind to new truth. It has crucified the prophets that were sent while building tombs to the prophets that had been. But its instinct of social preservation has ever been sound. It has not willingly let go the old values until the new have been tried out. It has held the line against the forces that would press us back to the chaos whence we came, while through its consecrated prophets it has furnished a workable plan for the future.

Religion as Communion with God

The final function of religion is communion with God. It converts what would otherwise be an abstract ideal into a consciousness of real Presence. It attunes our souls into living harmony with the divine. This presence takes

different forms in our life in accordance with our experience and temperament. It may be the stern call to duty, the sublimity of the moral law in our soul, more awesome than the starry heavens above. It may be the infinite friendliness of a life that envelops us even as the atmosphere. It may be a vision into the deeper meaning of life with its infinite reaches. But always it means the sense of companionship and co-operation with God. Always it pervades life like some sweet melody and melts its discord into harmony. Like new blood, it flows into the veins of our life and gives us strength. Always it expands our better self and makes it dominate the conflicting impulses of life. Always it means charity, forgiveness, and helpfulness to all our human kind. Always it means friendship with God. It is a sixth sense of the soul, opening up to it the enveloping reality of the ideal beauty and goodness.

Today more than ever, in the stress and strain of modern society, we need the transforming consciousness of that eternal Presence, working for redemption from our selfishness and isolation, for wholeness in our conception of life, for sacrificing love in the realization of the purpose of the race. This consciousness of the living presence of the spirit of God in humanity, reinforcing its ideals, leading in its upward struggle, healing the wounds of fraternal strife, is the only force strong enough to keep humanity from disintegrating and sufficient to mold its divergent interests into loyalty to a comprehensive cause. In the sign of the cross alone, the symbol of devoted sacrifice for the whole, can we conquer. The Kingdom of God is the only salt of

the earth which can keep life from losing its savor, the only light which can guide humanity to a common goal.

Is this ideal world of our striving an illusory oasis in the desert? Is this creative building out of life but a tissue of fairy tales, woven by our will to believe? Is this sense of peace, in companionship with the divine, but a lullaby by which we wretched mortals soothe ourselves to sleep? Shall we waken with a shock to the naked reality of matter in motion, a world void of ideals and meaning? So materialism preaches with supreme confidence in many quarters and in many insidious forms. For it the satisfaction of our animal lusts is the final reality of life; the overweening instinct for power is the final arbiter of destiny. Of this philosophy of life we are now eating the bitter fruits.

I prefer to believe with the noble idealists of all time that our ideal yearnings, crude though they are in content, are homing instincts, orienting us to our Father's house; that in them somehow the universe which brought us forth gives us its intimations of our place and goal. With the great poet, I thank God, not so much for the "delight and liberty" attained,

But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts before which our mortal
nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,

Are yet a master light of all our seeing:
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence.

The world of sense, of solid mechanism, is but an island floating in the larger world of spiritual forces and deriving its direction and significance from it. We are not duped when we believe that the dice of the universe are loaded for right and reason. It is only so that we can have sanity and understanding. Else the world were a mad dance of

chance. Only so can the universe furnish us with a vocation suitable to the nature it has given us. Else life were a grim joke. Only so can we realize a happy humanity.

Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore
And hear the mighty waters rolling ever-
more.

THE CHURCH AND THE STATE UNIVERSITY

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The problem of education is being taken very seriously just now by our church workers. Particularly are our religious leaders coming to see the religious significance of state institutions and are organizing work to meet the new conditions there established. The BIBLICAL WORLD has already published a number of very important papers in this field, but the present paper handles the matter from a little different point of view and with an equally keen sense of the importance of the great subject, especially as regards the practical working of the plan in local churches.

Education in the ancient world carried with it the element of correction and reproof, as well as mental development and training. The Proverbialist says, "Take fast hold of instruction; keep her, for she is thy life." And Paul says, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely

unto every good work." When such words as teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction are applied to education and filled with a content equal to life, it means that a trained intellect, a cultivated brain, a developed character, and an unfolded spiritual power are crystallized into conviction on all great moral questions and expressed in action on all great social questions.